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ABSTRACT

The recommendations presented in this report were developed by Triton College's Retention Committee, which was established in Fall 1980 to involve a large and representative number of faculty in the identification of actions teachers could take to improve student retention and success. After introductory material detailing the committee's mission and activities and defining the phases of the educational process to which the recommendations correspond, the suggested actions are presented. The first 20 of these apply to the activities associated with the enrollment of students in classes, including placement, scheduling, registration, and orientation. The next recommendations deal with classroom activities, and are presented in the categories of student/faculty contact, teaching techniques, testing and evaluation, course requirements, motivation, and support services. An additional 33 recommendations are presented which focus specifically on improving faculty/student interaction. The next group of recommendations apply to support activities in the following categories: administration, counseling and advising, scheduling and registration, staff development, and student services. Finally, four actions are recommended for the post-enrollment phase to determine the factors that motivate students to withdraw from college. (JP)

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STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS
AN INSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

TRITON COLLEGE
Retention Committee
Academic Advisory Council
May 1, 1981

JC 810 383

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INTRODUCTION TO RETENTION REPORT

Concern for the educational achievement of its students has been a continuing priority of the faculty and staff at Triton College. Over the past several years, Triton College has initiated several major actions to respond more adequately to student needs and to improve opportunities for student success. These initiatives have included staff development, a revised academic placement policy, and an expanded developmental education and learning assistance program. More recently, in the fall of 1980, the Academic Advisory Council established a college-wide committee to study retention and to report back its recommendations to the Council. The following report represents the efforts of that Retention Committee.

The mission of the Retention Committee was specific. A broad-based faculty involvement was to be achieved and the focus of the committee's recommendations was to be on actions faculty could take to improve student success. The resulting report, therefore, is intended to emphasize those things that bear directly on the teaching-learning process and that are within the control of the faculty member. The report does not intend to describe a broad comprehensive action plan that could be undertaken by all elements of the college community. Clearly, there are a number of administrative actions, for example, that could be undertaken to support the teaching-learning process and, thereby, contribute to student success.

Specifically, the mission of the Retention Committee was as follows:

a) to review research and issues related to the academic success of students
b) to involve a large and representative number of faculty in the study of student academic success
c) to develop and recommend a series of actions designed to improve the academic success of students

In implementing its mission, the Retention Committee formed six subcommittees to insure broad faculty involvement and to elicit the best available thought on the subject of student success. As a result, over 30 faculty members were directly involved in committee work generating suggestions. In addition, the entire faculty workshop, which initiated the spring semester, was devoted to discussion of retention. These discussions led to a number of suggestions which were passed on to the Retention Committee and which are included in the current report.

The Retention Committee held its initial meetings on October 27 and November 4. At these times, the sub-committee structure was established and a review made of existing research. For the next several months, the sub-committees met and prepared their recommendation. During the months of March and April, the Retention Committee reviewed and edited a collection of over 300 recommendations. A format was established and 182 recommendation have been included in the committee's final report.

In presenting its report to the Academic Advisory Council, the Retention Committee asks that the Council endorse its recommendations in general and recommend them to the faculty and staff for their personal consideration. *

*On May 1, 1981, the Academic Advisory Council endorsed the report of the Retention Committee and recommended it to the faculty for their personal consideration.

Dr. Daniel F. Moriarty
Chairperson

RETENTION COMMITTEE

Dr. Dan Moriarty, Chairperson
Robert Anthony
Thomas Bondi
Carol Casten
James Given
Barbara Haxby
Dr. Phoebe Helm
Maurice Lemoine
Michael Lynch
Dennis Maki
Linda Mullikin
Dr. C.K. Patel
Patrick Plunkett

SUB-COMMITTEES

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Dr. C.K. Patel
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Dennis Maki
Steve Branz
Sandra Cece
Jean Hornewer
Sharon Pieroni

Robert Anthony
Michael Lynch
William Andrews
Dr. George Carter
Larry Lane
Paul Salmon
Dr. Douglas Shawhan

In addition to the individuals mentioned above, the entire college faculty contributed to this report through their participation in the Faculty Workshop held this Spring, 1981.

DEFINITIONS

I. College Enrollment Phase

Refers to those activities normally associated with the enrollment of students in classes.

II. Class Attendance Phase

Refers to the period during which the student is actually enrolled in class.

Instructional Strategies

Refers to activities conducted by the instructor that influence directly the instructional process and outcomes. Emphasis is placed on the presentation of course materials and the evaluation of student progress.

Faculty-Student Interaction

Refers to faculty activities that impact directly on the affective dimension of the relationship between student and instructor and thereby on the progress and outcomes of the instructional process itself.

Support Activities

Refers to those activities conducted outside the classroom in support of the instructional process.

III. Post-Enrollment Phase

Refers to that period in which a student has ceased enrollment and includes activities that help us to understand better why a student has ceased enrollment and that may lead a student to renew enrollment.

RETENTION

I. College Enrollment Phase

Placement

1. Follow rigorously the college approved placement policy in the admission of all new students.

2. Evaluate the usefulness of the existing reading and writing placement test.

3. Review placement procedures for non-degree students.

4. Review appropriateness of reading skills assessment for placement in Court Reporting and Secretarial Science.

Schedule

5. Devise creative, flexible scheduling. Rigid time slots sometimes get in the way of learning.

6. Create a number of open entrance/exit courses for late students which would begin on the 11th day of class.

7. Provide an individualized open entrance/exit course in basic accounting for students who fail the first accounting test and/or drop accounting.

8. Add fixed time IMS course.

9. Develop a course directory that will include more detailed course descriptions, particular teaching strategies and skills required for success in the course.

10. Develop and make available courses in idiomatic English.

Registration

11. Close registration for Developmental Education courses by the first day of class.

12. Adhere to prerequisite requirements more stringently. Perhaps these courses could be "flagged" on the computer so that the student's enrollment in the course would not be accepted if prerequisites were not met.

13. Keep class sizes within established limits.

I. College Enrollment Phase (continued)

Orientation

14. Assign all students (regardless of curriculum) needing three (3) Developmental Education courses to the Developmental Education Program Counselor for one year.

15. Provide for students entering health careers a summer program that will allow students to improve learning skills.

16. Include current students at information sessions for students seeking entry to Allied Health programs.

17. Restructure information sessions and orientations to provide realistic insights into programs and into the occupation the prospective student wishes to enter.

Other

18. Utilize Triton faculty for student recruitment within high schools.

19. Determine the reading level of course text books prior to test selection.

20. Include the full-time instructor when possible in the interview process when selecting a part-time instructor who will be teaching a course usually taught only by that full-time instructor.

II. Class Attendance Phase

A. Classroom Activities

Instructional Strategies

Student-Faculty Contact

1. Provide time for individual conferences.

2. Identify students who are undecided about their career choice and refer them to the Career Center.

3. Make sure that students know your schedule, your office location and your extension.

4. Contact a student immediately (preferably by phone) if the student is absent and encourage him/her to return to class.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Instructional Strategies

Student-Faculty Contact (continued)

5. Confer promptly with a student who does poorly in your class. Diagnose problem and provide appropriate referral service.

6. Confer with other faculty members who may have your students in their courses.

Teaching Techniques

7. Be prepared to modify instructional plans based on student composition and learning styles.

8. Tape some of your classroom lectures and let students use them in the Independent Learning Lab.

9. Pair up high-achievers and low-achievers for study groups.

10. Provide a fellow student as a tutor.

11. Use diversified (e.g. lecture, discussion, small groups, guest speaker) teaching techniques to maintain interest.

12. Provide field trips, encourage workshops and seminars selected to your subject matter.

13. Allow students to progress at their own speed (individualized instruction)

14. Use more tutorial type instruction and small seminars.

15. Divide class for instructional purposes and have more small group instruction.

16. Develop an extended studies program; try to reach students at home via some correspondence technique after they have signed for classroom course.

17. Trade classes with another member of your department; announce to the class ahead of time that this change is being planned as a variation, and that the class is equally responsible for the material covered during this class period.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Instructional Strategies

Teaching Techniques (continued)

18. If your class lends itself to role playing, this may provide interest.

19. Change the tempo of your class periodically.

20. Give a lecture on one day; prepare a handout on that lecture for distribution the next day. This is a reminder for those who heard the lecture and a good resource for the person who was absent.

21. Bring in a reliable guest speaker once or twice in the semester.

22. Have students read over each other's papers before they turn them in.

23. Develop reading lists which complement your subject matter and put them on reserve in the library.

24. Team teach with a colleague or switch with another faculty member: invite a guest lecturer to your course.

25. Engage in bell-to-bell planning, (class activities begin and end on time) thus not rewarding tardy behavior.

26. Move around the class as you discuss things. Try to avoid being a captive behind the desk and creating artificial barriers between you and your students.

27. Conduct a full instructional period on the first and every class meeting.

28. Get to the class early and leave after others have gone.

Testing/Evaluation

29. Provide a sample test prior to your test, especially prior to the post-test.

30. Give at least 4 to 5 exams instead of just a mid-term and final.

31. Let students evaluate you periodically. Do not wait until the end of the semester.

32. Give early feedback following tests, written assignment and group activities.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Instructional Strategies

Testing/Evaluation (continued)

33. Use the contract grading system, i.e., identify all course requirements for each grade level at the beginning of the semester and have students contract for the desired grade. (Reduce the grade-game).

34. Search for alternative methods to evaluate student.

35. Devise an alternative way to test students.

36. Allow students to use dictionaries on test days.

37. Give students an opportunity to retake a test if they score a D or F on it.

38. Assign written work that is due on test day. The assignment will force the student to do an assignment on the topics that are being tested.

39. If appropriate, use a pretest on the first or second day of class.

40. Return all quizzes and written assignments the next class session.

Course Requirements

41. Be consistent in the classroom and let students know your requirements at the beginning of the semester.

42. Have a syllabus and pinpoint what you expect of each student.

43. Set the requirements for the course at the first meeting.

44. Describe what will happen in class, the expected routine of activities during class.

45. Allow flexibility based on student interests. Writing assignments and some other activities should have a number of options.

46. Give multi-assignments with a minimum to be completed.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Instructional Strategies

Course Requirements (continued)

47. Stress class attendance and have frequent short assignments. Focus grading standard on individual achievement rather than on group competition. Don't limit the number of A's or B's that can be earned in a given class.

48. Allow students to substitute term projects, experimental projects, oral reports, or other student initiated projects for one of your tests.

49. Be sure to give the students complete written instruction on how you expect them to prepare assignments. Try to anticipate where the students will experience difficulty in knowing what to do and give them written handouts to explain how to do the assignment.

50. Always try to get the student to select among alternatives. Many will be reluctant to choose an assignment.

51. Require that absences and incomplete assignments be made up.

52. Be sure to explain all assignments at least twice on two separate days. It will be review for those who were there, but will be new for those who were absent.

53. Verify in the first class that students have the prerequisites for the particular couse.

Motivation

54. In addition to theories, principles and definitions, relate practical use of the content in everyday life situations, if your discipline allows it.

55. Provide extra-credit activities to motivate student to work for higher grades.

56. Share knowledge of backgrounds of students with class.

57. Recognize the level of ability of the student and encourage the student to perform at a level consistent with his/her ability and not to evaluate himself/herself against an abstract, ideal achievement standard.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Instructional Strategies

Motivation (continued)

58. Integrate experiential learning opportunities into the academic curriculum. Students seem to want to see the application of what they are learning to career interests.

59. Increase student participation in school activities and classroom situations to widen their involvement in the educational process.

60. Be knowledgeable, organized, enthusiastic instructors; as instructors, we must have our eyes on the sparrow's fall.

61. Help students to set specific goals.

62. Keep an eye on the poor performer. Learn to use the counselor and take the initiative to meet with this student to discover what is wrong.

63. Keep students posted as to their progress and suggest things they can do to help themselves. Don't wait until it is too late.

64. Present course material in a non-threatening way.

65. Use familiar examples when explaining something.

66. Be consistent in enforcing rules and regulations. Be kind, but not permissive.

67. Find ways to help students get organized. Distribute information to help them prepare for assignments.

68. Find ways to involve students without embarrassing them. Try to get out-going students involved early.

Support Services

69. Invite a counselor to discuss study skills immediately after you give test results.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Instructional Strategies

Support Services (continued)

70. Take a tour of the library with the class. Have a librarian be a resource person.

71. Use diversified (e.g. films, video tape, program on TV, transparencies), audio-visual resources to stimulate learning environment.

72. Consider programmed AV materials in music history and/or literature classes.

73. Utilize the many concert offerings in the Chicago area for course activities in music history literature. Have field trips to the Chicago Symphony, jazz showcases, Lyric Opera.

74. Make better use of our supplementary facilities. For example:
    1. The Independent Learning Lab is most helpful in administering and proctoring makeup tests. They will follow your instructions to the letter.
    2. Graphic Arts will make transparencies, signs, almost anything you want.
    3. The Audio-Visual Department will bring their cameras and record one of your classes.

75. Involve members of the LAC staff in classroom activities.

76. Utilize the library and the librarians in course instruction.

77. Make students aware of the many people and services available to them on the Triton College campus.

Other

78. Encourage pre-registration for continuing students.

79. When classes must be canceled or moved, include an explanation and assignment on the sign posting the cancellation.

80. Promote clubs and organizations to students with special and similar interests.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Instructional Strategies

Other (continued)

81. Keep the students informed of what is happening on the campus.

82. Utilize students in your lectures or labs. Give them a chance to explain something they are familiar with.

83. Identify early in the semester students having academic difficulties in order to provide them with special assistance.

84. Utilize tutors for general study problems and for specific content areas within curricula.

Faculty - Student Interaction

1. Be impartial and fair to everybody in the class; this creates mutual respect.

2. Praise students always; never downgrade!

3. Respect confidentiality of conversations with students. Do not talk about a student to others unless your genuine interest is to provide help for the student.

4. Provide assistance, concern, empathy and resources to the student when he or she is achieving below expectation in the classroom.

5. Acknowledge and give compliments to your students for their participation and leadership in different college and community activities.

6. Create a classroom atmosphere that is welcoming, friendly, warm, but controlled.

7. Have a sense of humor at appropriate times.

8. Tell about yourself, your interests, hobbies and abilities so that students know you as a person, as well as a teacher.

9. Attend extra-curricular activities at which your students show their abilities beyond the classroom.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Faculty Student Interaction (continued)

10. Join your students on campus for lunch.

11. Answer every question seriously.

12. Have patience.

13. Get to know the names of the students and allow each student to get to know one another.

14. In correcting papers, use student's first name.

15. Have the students realize immediately that you want them to to well in your class. Let them know that you are available for extra help.

16. Personalize or individualize as much as possible. Care, share, and show the importance (usefulness) of the skill taught.

17. Work to eliminate "fears." Students in RHT often feel insecure early in the course. Remedy: confidence building, humor, wide variety of rhetorical topic options.

18. Make sure student feels wanted and worthy and is treated as a human being; keep a positive attitude toward student and find ways to encourage learning.

19. Get students involved. Get them to make commitment to class by creating trusting class environment.

20. Tell the students what name or title you prefer to be called.

21. Find a reason to have one student remain after class for a minute to chat. Compliment this student on something.

22. Ask the students you relate to to give you an honest appraisal of how things are going in the course. Do this periodically.

23. Always try to be positive in dealing with a student's problems.

24. Listen carefully to what students have to say. Try to add to their comments rather than dismissing them and using your own.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

A. Classroom Activities

Faculty - Student Interaction (continued)

25. Make the students aware that a classroom error does not detract from them as a person.

26. Be competent in your subject matter so that you have the courage to admit that you don't know all the answers.

27. Teach your students to trust you. If they tell you something in confidence, treat it that way.

28. Lend some of your books to students and borrow some of theirs.

29. Encourage your students to exchange phone numbers so that they have "buddy" support when they miss a class.

30. Maintain good eye contact with the students. If you see them becoming uninterested, sleepy or inattentative, change your style and pace.

31. Maintain a positive attitude toward all students.

32. Communicate on a personal basis with students having an attendance problem before initiating any drop forms.

33. Be understanding of circumstances that may influence individual student responses.

B. Support Activities

Administrative

1. Reexamine "W" and "R" grade policy.

2. Encourage each administrator to teach a class or substitute for a teacher every semester.

3. Notify instructors promptly if a student withdraws from a course.

Counseling/Advising

4. Place more priority on counseling and caring for the student throughout their schooling.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

B. Support Activities

Counseling/Advising (continued)

5. Inform faculty of counseling skills and services.

6. Have counseling available for students with personal concerns.

7. Develop and encourage faculty academic advising program.

8. Continue to support and to update the VIP advising program.

9. Increase availability of tutors for courses with high attrition rates.

10. Refer students dropping a program to counselors for career guidance.

11. Provide human relation skills workshops especially for students in fields where good human relation skills are critical.

12. Provide Health Career students with an early introduction to the practical area of the field chosen.

13. Hold an out-of-class informal meeting several weeks after the semeste begins for students, faculty, counselors and LAC to interact.

14. Make known to instructors student reading levels upon request.

15. Provide additional counselors to meet the needs of the evening part-time students.

Scheduling/Registration

16. Facilitate switching students from section to section during semester according to the needs of the students.

17. Do not enroll students after late registration without explicit permission of instructor.

18. Supply extra classrooms to allow more courses to be offered in prime time slots.

19. Create a Friday College and schedule for interested students and faculty.

20. Allow more Monday and Wednesday scheduling of classes, rather than restrict the 2 day college to Tuesdays and Thursdays.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

B. Support Activities

Scheduling/Registration (continued)

21. Provide students the alternative of adding a basic skills course in lieu of the course they are dropping.

22. The lower 10% of students in the Developmental Education Program should be assigned to specific tutors in the Learning Assistance Center, and required to attend tutorial sessions in addition to their course work.

23. Keep lab classes at a level that will allow instructors to work promptly with students needing help.

Staff Development

24. Continue to improve mentor leadership for part-time faculty.

25. Encourage faculty to get practical experience in their fields. It will make their teaching more significant.

26. Support faculty in their innovative, experimental teaching techniques.

27. Give instructors release time to develop special instructional material for under and high achievers.

28. Permit R & D for course experimentation.

29. Provide seminars for faculty on the cultural differences of students as they impact on instruction and learning.

30. Integrate part-time faculty into the retention effort.

31. Provide staff development for all part-time instructors and set up requirements before a part-time instructor can qualify to teach a course.

Services

32. Speed up the production by Media-Graphics of materials necessary for instruction.

33. Arrange help in correcting essays, e.g., another college is beginning a computer correction program.

II. Class Attendance Phase (continued)

B. Support Activities

Services (continued)

34. Provide more immediate response and less complex procedures from support agencies (i.e., media production, graphics, publicity, etc.)

35. Increase availability of librarians to students.

Other

36. Hold student seminars asking students how to retain students.

37. Use suggestion boxes in the various academic areas of the college to solicit constructive advice.

38. Increase communications among faculty members of different departments in matters related to individual student progress.

39. Encourage faculty and staff to provide directions for students during the first few days of classes.

40. Encourage faculty to announce at the end of their class that they will assist students in finding their next class. (Similar to the airlines)

41. Evaluate all lab facilities and equipment for the purpose of providing an adequate learning environment in the labs.

III. Post-Enrollment Phase

1. Contact students who have withdrawn several weeks after their withdrawal date to review reasons for withdrawal.

2. Follow-up on students who attend information sessions in Health Careers, but who do not complete applications.

3. Contact students who drop out and inform them that makeup work can be provided.

4. Do continuous study to find out why students drop.

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